



Robert McClelland MP

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Federal Member for Barton

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STRENGTHENING THE AUSTRALIA-US ALLIANCE

Labor in Government will make the Australia-United States alliance even stronger.

We will achieve this by being a steadfast, straight talking friend and by helping our American allies by carrying a greater share of the security and development burden in the Asia Pacific.

The United States is already heavily engaged in our region. But they would welcome a greater Australian contribution to building regional security and the improving the standard of governments in what has become known as our arc of responsibility.

During a visit to the United States in April of this year I paid a second visit to the Joint Inter Agency Taskforce West (JIATF-W). JIATF-W is an important counter narcotics co-ordinating agency responsible for the Asia Pacific region. I was disappointed to learn that despite it having been considered for several years a representative of the Australian Federal Police has not been posted to the Agency.

Labor is determined to support the vital security and law enforcement role of JIATF-W and will permanently place an AFP representative to assist the work of the Agency. This permanent AFP representative will facilitate even closer co-ordination and with the US in the areas of drug enforcement, organised crime and counter terrorism.

A Rudd Government Labor will provide a permanent military staff member to the United States Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS). APCSS undertakes important work of security capacity building and cooperation in our region.

It has been suggested to me that an Australian military officer would be most welcome as a permanent member on the staff of the Center. It was pointed out that being on staff would enable Australia to obtain ongoing input from the 45 participating countries. We would also have greater ability to establish links with future military and political leaders from our region.

The work of the United States in our region is outstanding. It is regrettable that the value of that work and its significance for regional stability is regularly undervalued.

Labor has supported the Alliance for over 65 years - before the Liberal Party even existed.

Far from downgrading the Australia-US Alliance, as the Liberals have suggested, Labor will enhance our key strategic relationship and seek to make an already special friendship even stronger and more effective.

** Mr McClelland today addressed the Foreign Correspondents Association on the Australia-US Alliance. A copy of the speech is attached.*

Contact: Tom Cameron 0417 147 932